

I. CLAIM AMENDMENTS

Please amend the claims as indicated below:

1. through 36. Canceled.

37. (New) A method for providing a pricing hint to a participant during an on-line auction comprising:

using a bid advisor program cooperating with an on-line auction program and a web browser, providing to a bidder, who is participating in the on-line auction and who is bidding on a product using a computer with an on-line capability, a competitive cost of the product by performing the steps of:

responsive to the bidder indicating that the bidder wants a pricing hint, querying the bidder to a type of pricing hint;

responsive to the bidder selecting the type of pricing hints, searching the selected database in accordance with the type of pricing hint for a closest match on pricing and displaying the pricing hint to the bidder on the computer; and

responsive to the bidder selecting the pricing hint to be the bid, automatically placing the bid in the on-line auction;

wherein when the bidder selects a historical price hint as the type of pricing hint, accessing a historical price database, identifying a historical price paid at an earlier date for a product matching the item, and displaying the historical price paid on the client computer as the pricing hint;

wherein when the bidder selects a market value pricing hint as the type of pricing hint, accessing a market value database, identifying a given number of similar products, calculating

the market value based on the given number of similar products, and displaying the market value on the client computer as the pricing hint; and

wherein when the bidder selects a current offering pricing hint as the type of pricing hint, accessing a current offerings database, identifying a retail value at which the item is currently being publicly offered for sale, and displaying the retail value on the client computer as the pricing hint.